

# Michigan Freedom Trail Commission Meeting Minutes

October 3, 2017

Michigan History Center

702 W. Kalamazoo Street, Lansing, MI

**Commissioners Present:** Amanda Campbell, Roy Finkenbine, Edwina Murphy, Michael Nassaney, Robin Peebles, Reverend Kevin Turman

**Via Conference Call:** David Teeter

**Excused:** Ronald Brown, Rochelle Danquah, Juanita Moore

**Staff present:** Sandra Clark, Mary Patrick

**Visitors:** None

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Finkenbine called the meeting to order at 11:13 PM.
2. **Agenda:** Campbell moved to approve the agenda; Turman seconded the motion, and the agenda was approved unanimously.
3. **Public Comments:** None.
4. **Approval of Minutes:** Turman moved to approve the June 23, 2017, meeting minutes as submitted; Campbell seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

5. **Action Items:**

a. **Ideas for regional collaborations**

The commission discussed ways the FTC might bring local efforts together to promote regional collaboration, create alliances, and expand partnerships for grant applications, education, and cultural tourism. By hosting a statewide event, the FTC could create the framework for the creation of synergies, conversations, and buy-in to create a statewide community.

The starting goal is creation of an originating event. The event's purpose will be to build synergies across the state by bringing people together and creating a statewide sense of community. A website can help frame and publicize the event.

- Wright Museum would be an excellent co-host, and Finkenbine will discuss the possibility with Juanita Moore.
- Identify and invite partners in all counties, especially in southern Michigan.
- Southwest Michigan area and Detroit are both ripe for collaboration.
- Cooperation already exists between the Michigan History Center, the Library of Michigan and the Wright Museum, as well as between Cass County and Battle Creek.
- Identify a subset of people to form an ad hoc committee to meet monthly
- Create a task force to explore other things.
- Once begun, an event needs to be held every year.
- Location: The MHC can accommodate 200 people in the Forum, and there are breakout rooms that can be used; Battle Creek or Cass County and Detroit would need to be part of a regular rotation.

- Key to long-term success will be having a clear leader among the cultural institutions with the ability to establish the groundwork and organize a group of dedicated volunteers.
- Nassaney offered to assist with a workshop.

At the Event:

- Ask all attendees to reflect on their abilities, resources and challenges;
- A poster session;
- Tour(s);
- Discuss the purpose and goals, and focus on one or two of those things;

Website:

- An internet presence can help develop a sense of identity and provide evidence of what is happening in Michigan;
- Can be used to frame and publicize current happenings;
- Should include a collective map that shows UGRR sites, monuments, etc. (Nassaney offered to assist);
- Can include blogs from different perspectives, teacher resources, and information about who is working on a site nomination.
- A website is more fluid and flexible than a newsletter.
- If the format allows the public to enter events and information, it needs to be web-based. The Seeking Michigan site is more flexible than state government sites.
- Information could be added to the MHC's existing Facebook page since it is very active; it could also share content of others' events.
- Need to identify an entity to get behind it and make sure it is good information; possibly the Wright Museum would be interested in hosting the site since they have already had much success.
- Once a purpose is established, include area destination marketing organizations (convention and business bureaus) that have an industry newsletter, universities, and other organizations.
- Murphy said the LOM can promote items on its website.

**b. Network to Freedom Nominations**

Nassaney said that the Cass County driving tour sites nomination done last year has not yet been submitted to NPS. He followed up with Sondra Mose-Ursery regarding the Free Soil tour, but she is not aware of the current status. The tours being organized by Michelle Johnson are not nominated tours nor do they occur on a scheduled basis; rather, they take place at random. It may need to be removed from the list.

**c. Status of Standing Committees**

This item was inadvertently included on the agenda, and no discussion was held.

**d. 2018 Meeting Schedule and Locations**

Meetings will be held quarterly, on Fridays at 11:00 AM. Locations will be determined after the schedule is approved.

## 6. Reports

### a. Staff:

Clark reported that the Michigan Historical Marker database is available to the public at [www.michigan.gov/markers](http://www.michigan.gov/markers). Markers can be searched by categories that include title, theme, location and key words. The database will be updated continuously. Work on exhibit updates include stories from Native People and about the underground railroad and free black communities from 1815 to 1865.

### b. Chairperson:

Finkenbine reported that he spoke with people from Walled Lake who are interested in documenting and nominating potential UGRR sites there; made a presentation on "Using Historic Places to Teach History" to an UGRR Teachers Institute at Wayne County Community College; attended the Ohio River National Freedom Corridor Underground Railroad Conference in Richmond, Indiana. A full written report is attached.

### c. Vice Chair: None.

### d. Commissioner Reports:

Campbell noted a GPS-based application recently piloted by the Shawnee Forest that is similar to a virtual tour guide/scavenger hunt/GEO cache, and rooted in historical events. Visitors can locate things based on their current location and there are pop-ups with links to more information.

### e. Standing Committee Updates:

- Site Identification, Facilities and Programs (Danquah, Nassaney):
- Cultural and Heritage Tourism (Peebles, Teeter): Peebles is working with the *Travel Michigan* publisher about stories for the magazine or information on their website, possibly a promotion of the State Archives as source of information for African Americans. This would provide a story along with a tangible place for people to visit. Peebles also mentioned that small articles are continuously being sought for the front of *Michigan Moments*.
- Preservation and Support:
- Education: (Brown, Finkenbine)

## 7. New Business: None.

## 8. News and Announcements:

Finkenbine read and highly recommended a book about slaves and freedom seekers in the Detroit River borderland by Tiya Miles, *Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straights* (New Press).

## 9. Adjourn meeting:

Peebles moved to adjourn the meeting; the meeting was adjourned at 12:41 PM without objection.

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Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary